

Introducing Civic Engagement to Youth

Much of Unit 1 helps introduce some of the ideas behind civic engagement. However, it can be helpful to take additional time to introduce CE to youth. Some youth may find it difficult to focus on each of the units without an understanding of where the process is going. Many youth may not be familiar with the term civic engagement. Setting aside additional time to introduce civic engagement to youth can help address both of these issues.

The most important thing to remember when introducing CE to youth is to generate and build enthusiasm from the beginning. Participants will be able to tell how enthusiastic the facilitators are, and their enthusiasm will generally reflect that. Remember to have fun with the process and encourage youth to have fun.

Introducing civic engagement as a term and a concept

Civic engagement is not easily defined. For youth, this may be the first time they hear the term. On page iii of the introduction section in the *Roadmap* there is a short introduction to the terms "citizenship" and "civic engagement" that can be utilized to help facilitate an introduction to both terms for youth.

Facilitating the activities outlined in The Most Exciting Intro to CE Ever can be a great way to start off. Both activities can serve to help introduce the concept of civic engagement to youth. Take a Stand can be utilized in a variety of ways. Some possible questions could include:

- ⇒ Are there things in your community that you would change if you could? What about the country? Or the world?
- ⇒ Do you think that it's important to be civically engaged? (You could also ask if it's important to help others, to vote, be involved in their community, etc.)
- ⇒ Do you think that you have the power to make a difference in your community? The country? The world?

You may also want to facilitate a short discussion about what civic engagement means. You could start by asking youth what they think civic engagement means or what the individual words "civic" and "engagement" mean. Encourage a discussion and try to create a group consensus around a final definition. Dictionary definitions such as the ones in the *Roadmap* can be used, but they should be broken down and explained. Any final definition should be in the youths' own words. Consider making a poster of your final definition and posting it during each CE session.

Introducing the *Roadmap* process

Depending on how you facilitate the *Roadmap*, it could take several weeks to finish the first six units and plan a service project. If youth can see where the process is going from the beginning they will be more likely to stay engaged throughout a lengthy process.

Introducing the *Roadmap* should include a brief (one sentence) summary of each of the units as well as a general schedule of when the units are going to be facilitated. This can be done with a handout and short explanation that highlights the goals of the units. Consider making a poster to hang in your facilitation space that has the dates of all your meeting days, what portion of the curriculum you'll be doing that day, and the goals of that day's meeting.